



Photo by Roni Doyon

**Bernalillo County
Community Health
Council**

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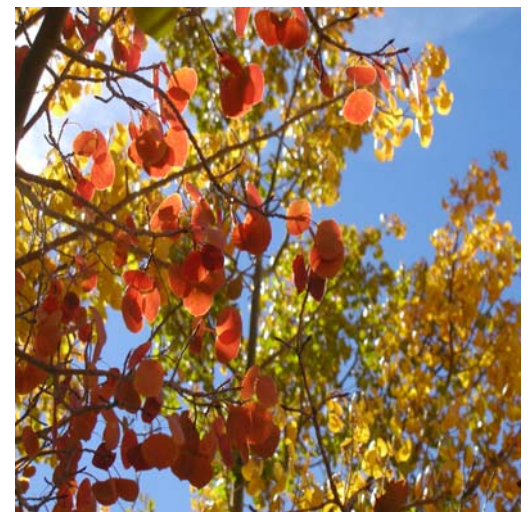
Community Health

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Welcome to the Bernalillo County Community Health Council Newsletter!

Welcome and thank you for reading the first issue of the Bernalillo County Community Health Council newsletter. The Council strives to improve the health and well-being of all Bernalillo County residents and neighborhoods through a variety of strategies and activities including, developing a Community Health Profile to identify and map our community's health resources, needs and characteristics, identifying and prioritizing important issues related to individual, familial, school and neighborhood health, working in partnership with other individuals, groups, and agencies to promote health awareness and to provide community education about health issues, and creating action plans, strategies, and activities to achieve the systemic changes needed to meet the varied health needs of all Bernalillo County residents. The mission of the Council is to improve the health and quality of life in Bernalillo County through coalition building, health assessment and prioritization, and community action. Through this newsletter, we strive to inform the community about



what the Council is doing and link public health activities throughout the County and State. The Council is made up of individuals who are committed to improving the lives of citizens in Bernalillo County. If you are interested in joining us, meetings are held every third Wednesday from 11:30-1:30 at TVI, 851 University NE in the 2nd floor conference room.

Teen Pregnancy Facts

- The primary risk factors for teen pregnancy are:
 - early school failure
 - early behavior problems,
 - distressed/dysfunctional families
 - poverty
- New Mexico has the 3rd highest teen birth rate in the nation
- The cost of teen childbearing to New Mexico taxpayers is over half a billion dollars a year

Source: New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition

Access to Health Care Louise Kahn

Many, many residents of Bernalillo County are taking too long to get the health care they need, and many are using emergency rooms for their primary care. This is a waste of our resources, increases the financial burden on low income families due to illness, and ultimately creates large medical bills that people living under the Federal Poverty Rate cannot ever pay off. The Community Coalition for Healthcare Access was the NE Quadrant Council this past year. Over the last three years, we have had a lot of success working with community members, advocacy, faith-based organizations, County Commissioners, and the administration at UNM Hospital to develop hospital policies that will help to decrease racial disparities in access to health care in our County. We have helped to revise the process and forms for eligibility for the UNM Care Program, which provides a financial assistance program for low-income health consumers. Those on the program increased from 10,000 to 13,000 over the past several years, since we began to push for these changes. We have worked to increase

medical interpretation services at the hospital, and to develop payment policies that apply equally to all residents of the County, rather than to only some. In December, there will be a Summit on UNM Hospital, called by Governor Richardson, to look at issues of accountability for taxpayer dollars and other concerns that have been raised about care for medically indigent people in our county. The Community Coalition for Healthcare Access can be reached at 505-315-0546.



Photo by Roni Doyon

Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Parenting Johnny Wilson

The teen pregnancy prevention subcommittee of the Bernalillo Community Health Council began meeting over a year ago. The committee members began discussing various hypotheses regarding the causes of New Mexico's persistent poor showing in the teen pregnancy arena. What should the Council be doing to try and impact this difficult policy area?

As various council members, from diverse communities within the county spoke, it became clear that a one-size-fits-all message was not going to work. Alice Otero (a council member at the time) brought a fabulous new message for consideration. The "Babies... love them enough to wait" campaign tested wonderfully with young women in focus groups. Males did not appear to be effected by that message. That the prevention discussion includes the "abstinence only" versus "comprehensive sex education" debate further illustrates the complexity of addressing this issue within the Health Council

The Council was able to secure funding to produce some "Babies..." brochures and collaborate with the New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition (NMTPC) to reach teen women with the 'wait' message. The Council sup-

ported NMTPC at the announcement of the completion of the Challenge 2005 and has been kept abreast of the formation of the New Mexico Coalition to Support Sexuality Education.

"...it is clear that bringing down our high rates of teen pregnancy will reduce a significant contributor to many of our other negative health and quality of life indicators."

The subcommittee has agreed that it would like to reach out to various groups involved in teen pregnancy and teen parent issues and encourage their representation at subcommittee meetings (regardless of Council membership). The subcommittee notes that the Council is not working towards being a provider but in affording providers a forum for collaboration and in identifying gaps in services.

The Bernalillo County Community Health Council can play a central role in putting prevention on the agenda in terms of county health priorities. Despite the fact that the issue forces the difficult discussion about teen sexuality, it is clear that bringing down our high rates of teen pregnancy will reduce a significant contributor to many of our other negative health and quality of life indicators.

Environmental Health & Preparedness Monica Justice, American Red Cross

TOGETHER WE PREPARE

When we come together, we become part of something bigger than us all. As part of the mission of the Bernalillo County Community Health Council to improve health and well-being, the council has partnered with the Mid-Rio Grande Chapter of the American Red Cross to provide the Together WE Prepare program to Bernalillo County residents. Launched by the American Red Cross on February 20, 2003, "Together We Prepare" is a nationwide initiative to help communities prepare for emergencies and disasters before they happen. Be it traditional disasters like house fires and hurricanes or new potential disasters such as acts of terrorism or the use of weapons of mass destruction, this exciting initiative emphasizes five simple, proactive actions that each individual and every family can take to be better prepared for whatever may come. The actions are: make a plan, build a kit, get trained, volunteer, and give blood. Through our collaboration, the Council has been offer-

ing this training in local communities. Governor Bill Richardson is encouraging all New Mexicans including businesses to obtain Preparedness/ Together We Prepare™ training. The Bernalillo County Community Health Council will continue to partner with organizations like the American Red Cross to prepare the communities in Bernalillo County and around the state. If you would like more information about the TogetherWE Prepare program please contact the Mid-Rio Grande Chapter at (505) 265-8514.



Sandia Mountains, photo by Roni Doyon

Bernalillo County Behavioral Health Collaborative Sarah Couch

New Mexico did something unique in May of 2004 with the implementation of House Bill 271, a law redesigning New Mexico's behavioral health care system through The Behavioral Health Planning Council and Purchasing Collaborative. It challenged each judicial district of New Mexico to form a collaborative, asking not only 17 of the state agencies who provide behavioral services, but community members, advocates, individual providers, and perhaps most importantly, family members and consumers of services to have a voice in what the redesign will look like as it takes shape over the next few years. Bernalillo County rose to that challenge.

The Bernalillo County Local Collaborative (BCLC) has been a true community forum where the many voices of the behavioral health care system are learning to speak, and are learning that, united, our voices are strong. In September, the BCLC voted in a 22-member steering committee. The BCLC feels that consumers and family members should be the driving voice, so 51% of the committee is made up of people who iden-



tify themselves as belonging to these groups. At the October 20th meeting we broke off into focus circles and began discussing where we want to

pool our collective energy realizing that, whether our passion is the children's, adult's, or other behavioral health world, we have much common ground. Perhaps our greatest accomplishment was on October 21st, when members of the BCLC went to Santa Fe and presented before the state's Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative. We were unanimously voted in as a local collaborative; it was the culmination of a year's hard work. Although nobody can say what the future will bring, we have hope that, together, we will be a strong voice for all people receiving behavioral health services in Bernalillo County.

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The Local Bernalillo County Behavioral Health Collaborative meets the third Thursday of the month from 5:30-7:30PM. Contact Leigh Mason at (505) 314-0319 for more information or visit www.berncohealthcouncil.org/behavioralhealth.htm.

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Vice-Chair: Johnny Wilson
Secretary: Monica Justice

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Ship to:

Upcoming Events

November 3rd Bernalillo County Behavioral Health Collaborative Steering Committee Meeting Contact Leigh Mason 314-0319

November 16th 11:30-1:30 Bernalillo County Community Health Council Meeting, Contact Leigh Mason, Coordinator, (505)314-0319

November 17th 5:30-7:30 Bernalillo County Behavioral Health Collaborative Meeting at the Unitarian Church on Comanche and Carlisle. Contact Leigh Mason (505) 314-0319

December 8th Legislative Budget Training and 2005 Health Policy Legislative Forum, Contact Cheryl Ferguson (505) 856-1403

December 9th New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition Conference, Contact (505) 254-8737

December 14 5:30-7:30 Bernalillo County Community Health Council Meeting, Contact Leigh Mason, Coordinator, (505)314-0319

December 15th 5:30-7:30 Bernalillo County Behavioral Health Collaborative Contact Leigh Mason 314-0319

January 18, 11:30-1:30, Bernalillo County Community Health Council Meeting Contact Leigh Mason, Coordinator (505) 314-0319

January 19th, 2-3PM New Mexico Remaking American Medicine Coalition Meeting, Contact Jennifer Trotter 505.998.9744

April 5-7 New Mexico Public Health Association Conference

April 7-8th Believe in New Mexico Girls Conference, Contact www.yearofthegirl.com



Photo by Roni Doyon
